

Why Israel?

“Israel will endure and flourish. ...It can neither be broken by adversity nor demoralized by success. It carries the shield of democracy and it honors the sword of freedom.”

—President John F. Kennedy



Israel has restored life to land that was a desert less than a century ago, developing thriving and modern cities such as Tel Aviv.

The Jewish people’s connection to the Land of Israel is among history’s oldest facts, enshrined in the first pages of the Bible.

In the centuries that followed God’s Biblical vow to make Abraham’s descendants a “great nation” in the Promised Land, Jews built a thriving civilization. Centered on the city of Jerusalem, the land of Israel became the realm of David and Solomon, the concern of prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah and the setting for the ministry of Jesus.

The Land of Israel has been an independent political entity only under Jewish sovereignty, first under the Biblical kingdoms and now as the modern state of Israel.

While foreign armies have conquered the territory, they have never managed to break the link between the Jewish people and the land or to completely dislodge Jews from the area. Jews have maintained a continuous presence in the Land of Israel for more than 3,000 years.

An Idea to Build a New Nation in an Ancient Land

After being dispersed around the world following the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E., Jews

were the subject of discriminatory laws, regular violence and even expulsion from most countries where they lived.

Yet, the memory of Israel and the desire to return to the ancient Jewish homeland remained a central part of the Jewish faith.

This religious yearning to return to their land became a political imperative in the 19th century, when the virulence of European anti-Semitism manifested itself in the form of persecution and massacres. Many Jews came to believe that they would only escape discrimination and murder in a state of their own.

The most outspoken proponent of this belief, known as Zionism, was Theodor Herzl, a prominent Austrian journalist. In the late 1890s, Herzl helped rally religious and secular Jews to the idea that a viable Jewish state could be re-established in the historic Land of Israel.

The Zionists sought international backing for their quest to form a new political entity in the land of their ancestors—a sparsely populated desert wasteland described in the 1860s by writer Mark Twain as “a desolate country...given over wholly to weeds—a silent mournful expanse.” In a major



The Holocaust demonstrated the need for the State of Israel and prompted hundreds of thousands of European Jews to immigrate to their historic homeland.

political victory for the Zionists, the British issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917, pledging to facilitate the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in the ancient Land of Israel. In 1922, the League of Nations recognized the “historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine” and the “grounds for reconstituting their national home in that country.”

Holocaust Increases Urgency for Establishing a Jewish State

Two decades later, the genocidal murder of Europe’s Jews would clearly demonstrate to the world the vital need for a Jewish refuge. Trapped without

anywhere to turn, six million Jews—a stunning 35 percent of the world’s Jewish population—were systematically murdered in Nazi death camps during the Holocaust.

In 1947, the United Nations voted to partition the historic Land of Israel into two states—one Arab and one Jewish. Even though more than half the area allocated for the Jewish nation was desert, the Jewish community in Palestine immediately accepted the compromise. The



Israel accepted—but the Arabs rejected—a 1947 U.N. plan that would have divided the British Mandate of Palestine into two states: one Arab and one Jewish.

Arabs rejected the plan, and five Arab armies invaded Israel, beginning a campaign to eliminate the Jewish state that persists in some circles to this day.

A New Nation Survives—and Thrives

Since its establishment in 1948, Israel has been forced to wage a struggle for survival, facing hostile neighbors with numerically superior armed forces while also contending with the constant threat of terrorism against its civilians.

In 1967, a defensive war against its Arab adversaries left Israel in control of territory including Gaza and the West Bank as well as the ancient capital of Jerusalem. The united city is Israel’s capital, and Israel has opened the city to all—protecting and guaranteeing access to Christian, Muslim and Jewish holy sites.

Israel’s enemies have not confined their fight for its destruction to the battlefield. Arab nations have attempted to economically isolate Israel with a decades-long boycott, and they routinely initiate efforts at the U.N. to single out Israel for diplomatic ostracism.

While combating these challenges, Israel has also faced the

task of forging a unified nation from an incredibly diverse range of immigrant groups. Since its founding, the tiny state has absorbed millions of immigrants from more than 100 countries, including Jews from the former Soviet Union, Ethiopia and those forced to flee from Arab countries.

The achievements of Israel are even more remarkable considering that the country possesses few natural resources—two-thirds of its land mass is arid desert. Israel has developed agricultural techniques that earned it admiration for “making the desert bloom.” Today, Israel is home to world-class universities and is a global giant when it comes to high-tech and medical innovations. Life-saving medical techniques and products used every day around the world—from computer processors to cell phones to instant messenger to generic drugs—have all been developed in Israel.

A National Ethos: Repairing the World

For Israel, it is not enough to serve as a safe haven for world Jewry. Equipped with first-hand knowledge of the challenges that resource-poor countries face, Israel has always strived to



Israel has shared its agricultural expertise and innovative techniques throughout the world, including in impoverished African nations.

fulfill the Jewish command to “repair the world.”

Before it had even established embassies in many world capitals, Israel sent experts abroad to teach Third World nations such skills as how to upgrade medical facilities, improve schools and coax crops from arid land. Today, Israel has one of the most extensive foreign assistance programs in the world for a nation of its size.

Less than a century removed from being only a dream in the hearts and minds of millions of Jews, Israel has emerged as a thriving democracy and global leader, committed to fulfilling its Biblical mandate of being a light unto the nations.

Key Points

- Since the establishment of a Jewish state more than 3,000 years ago, Jews have maintained a continuous presence in the Land of Israel and Jerusalem.
- Since Biblical times, neither the Palestinians nor any other group aside from the Jewish people has ever formed an independent political entity in the Land of Israel.
- The persecution of Jews throughout the world, culminating with the Holocaust, made establishing a Jewish homeland a necessity.
- The modern state of Israel has survived and thrived despite attempts to destroy it by Arab armies and Palestinian terrorists.
- Just 60 years after being established with the backing of the international community, Israel has become one of the world’s most advanced nations, providing the world with innovations in the fields of technology, medicine and agriculture.